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 C O R R E C T E D C O P Y (PARA 7)

E.O. 12065: RDS: 4 1/22/02 (BARRETT, ROBERT S.) OR-M
 TAGS: OREP (PERCY, CHARLES, H.) LE
 SUBJECT: SENATOR PERCY'S VISIT TO LEBANON: CONVERSATION WITH
 PRIME MINISTER

1. (S-ENTIRE TEXT)

2. SUMMARY: DURING A FORTY MINUTE CONVERSATION WITH
 SENATOR PERCY, THE PRIME MINISTER OF LEBANON EXPRESSED THE
 FOLLOWING VIEWS. THE PALESTINIAN PROBLEM IS BY FAR THE
 MOST SERIOUS ONE FOR LEBANON AND AGGRAVATES ALL OTHER
 PROBLEMS. IT HAS ALSO PERMITTED THE ENTRY OF THE USSR ONTO
 THE MIDDLE EAST SCENE. THE LEBANESE GOVERNMENT'S SUGGESTED
 PLAN FOR AN ORDERLY DEPARTURE OF THE SYRIAN ARAB DETERRENT
 FORCES FROM LEBANON IS UNFORTUNATELY STYMIED BY PLOITICAL

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MANEUVERINGS AND LEBANON MUST CONTINUE TO MWORK TOWARD THE REMOVAL OF THE PRETEXTS WHICH SYRIAN USES TO JUSTIFY THE CONTINUED PRESENCE OF ITS FORCES IN THE COUNTRY. USG CONTACT WITH THE PLO WOULD BE A GOOD THING AND WOULD SHORTEN THE ROAD TO PEACE IN THE REGION. THERE IS A GREAT DESIRE AT PRESENT AMONG THE LEBANESE FOR NATIONAL RECONCILIATION BUT THE LEBANESE PROBLEM IS LINKED TO REGIONAL PROBLEMS WHICH MUST BE ADDRESSED EFFECTIVELY AT AN EARLY DATE FOR TIME IS RUNNING OUT. END SUMMARY.

3. SENATOR PERCY, ACCOMPANIED BY AMBASSADOR DILLON, DCM BARRETT, AND SFRC STAFFER BANNERMAN, CALLED ON LEBANESE PRIME MINISTER (PM) SHAFIQ AL-WAZZAN ON JANUARY 20 AND HAD A CONVERSATION LASTING FORTY MINUES.

4. SENATOR PERCY OPENED THE CONVERSATION BY SAYING THAT MUCH HAD HAPPENED SINCE HIS LAST VISIT TO LEBANON IN 1975. HE COMMENDED THE PM FOR HIS COURAGE AND COOPERATION WITH PRESIDENT SARKIS, WHICH HE SAID ARE MUCH APPRECIATED BY THE USG.

5. THE PM WELCOMED THE SENATOR TO LEBANON. HE SAID THAT HE WAS ALWAYS HAPPY TO SEE PROMINENT OFFICIALS VISIT THE AREAS OS THEY COULD SEE THE SITUATION FIRST HAND AND GET CORRECT INFORMATION WHICH MIGHT RESULT IN NEW IDEAS AND POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS TO SOME OF THE REGION'S PROBLEMS. THE ARRIVAL OF SENATOR PERCY WAS THEREFORE A REASON FOR OPTIMISM. AL-WAZZAN CONCLUDED HIS OPENING REMARKS BY SAYING THAT THERE WAS NO NEED FOR HIM TO REPEAT WHAT HE HAD SAID TO OTHER AMERICANS RECENTLY, AS HIS VIEWS ARE WELL-KNOWN AND RESUMABLY CONTAINED IN THE EMBASSY'S REPORTS AND HE DID NOT WANT TO SOUND LIKE A PHONOGRAPH RECORD.

6. SENATOR PERCY SAID THAT HE APPRECIATED THE PM'S RETICENCE BUT THAT IT WOULD STILL BE USEFUL FOR HIM TO HEAR IN THE PM'S OWN WORDS WHAT HIS BIGGEST CONCERNS ARE, WHAT KEEPS HIM AWAKE AT NIGHT, AND WHAT HE THOUGHT THE USG COULD DO TO HELP LEBANON ON THESE ISSUES.

7. THE PM REPLIED THAT THE PALESTINIAN PROBLEM WAS THE

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PRIMORDIAL PROBLEM FOR LEBANON. IT WAS 30 YEARS OLD AND LIKE A SICKNESS WAS SPREADING THROUGH THE REGION. IF IT HAD BEEN PROPERLY DEALT WITH IN 1948 OR 1950, MANY PRESENT PROBLEMS WOULD NOT HAVE ARISEN. THE PALESTINIAN PROBLEM HAD ALSO OPENED THE DOOR FOR THE ENTRY OF THE SOVIET UNION INTO THE MIDDLE EAST. LEBANON HAS ITS PROBLEMS JUST LIKE ANY OTHER COUNTRY, BUT THEY ARE SERIOUSLY AGGRAVATED BY THE PALESTINIAN ISSUE. IF THE USG COULD HELP RESOLVE THIS PROBLEM, THERE WOULD BE A RELAXATION OF TENSIONS THROUGHOUT THE REGION, A RETURN TO NORMALCY, AND A RESURGENCE OF FRIENDSHIP WITH THE WEST, FIRST OF ALL WITH THE U.S., THE GREAT DEFENDER OF LIBERTY AND DEMOCRACY IN THE WORLD.

8. OTHERS OF HIS CONCERN, CONTINUED THE PM, WERE THE UNITY AND INTEGRITY OF LEBANON. THESE WERE THREATENED BY THE WISHES OF SOME PARTIES TO IMPLANT THE PALESTINIANS IN LEBANON AND OF OTHERS TO DIVIDE LEBANON OR AMPUTATE IT BY CHANGING ITS FRONTIERS. THE LEBANESE MUST FIGHT AGAINST THESE TENDENCIES.

9. THE SENATOR THEN ASKED THE PM TO COMMENT ON THE SYRIAN ROLE IN LEBANON, WHETHER THERE IS A DEADLINE FOR THEIR DEPARTURE, OR ANY PROGRESS ON STRENGTHENING THE CENTRAL GOVERNMENT SO THAT THE GOVERNMENT OF LEBANON (GOL) COULD ASK THE SYRIANS TO LEAVE.

***** MESSAGE SECTION 2 NOT IN DAG *****

END OF MESSAGE

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